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SAM KIETH • WILLIAM MESSNER-LOEBS
The Maxx
maxximized

THE MAXX MAXXIMIZED

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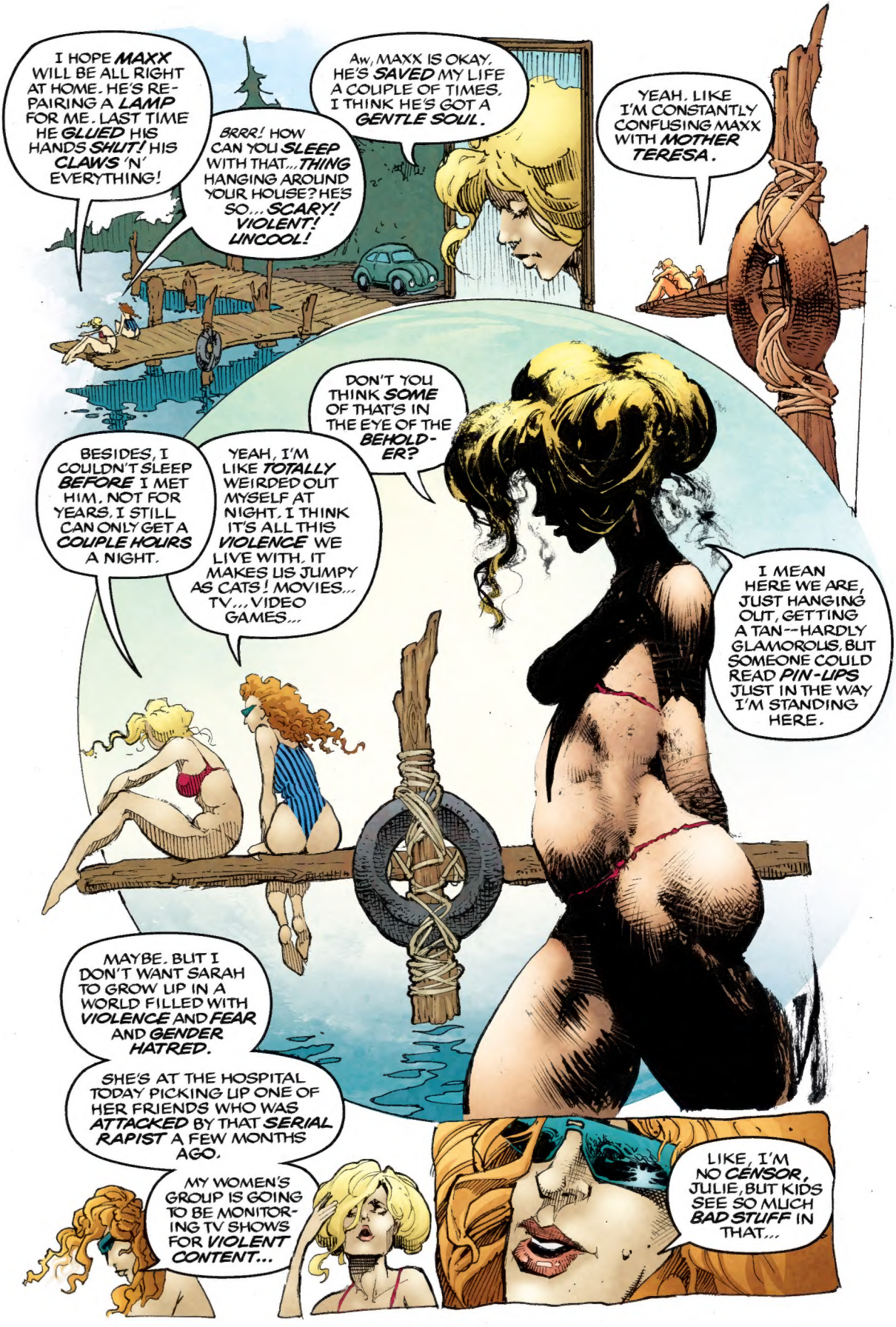
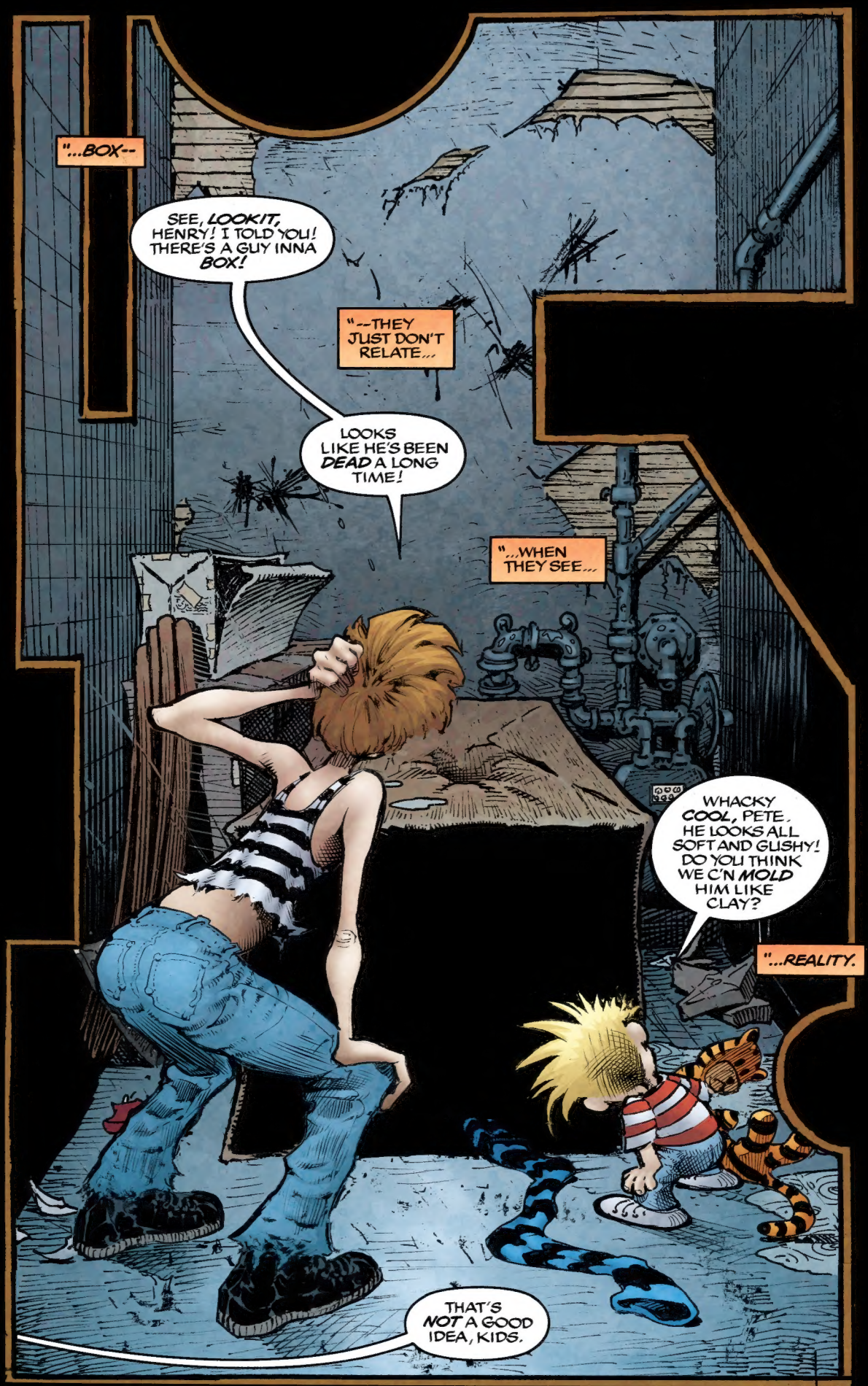
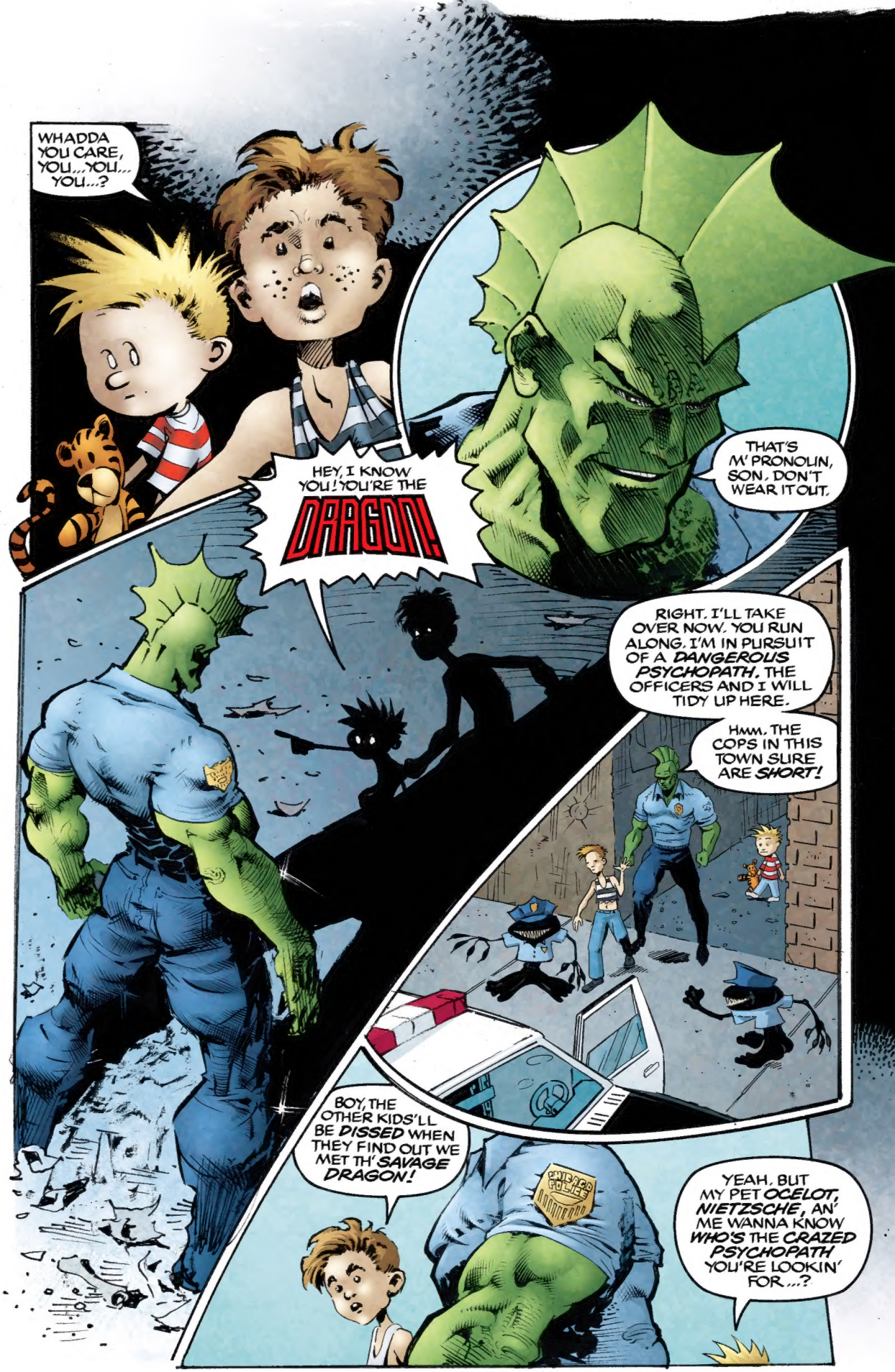
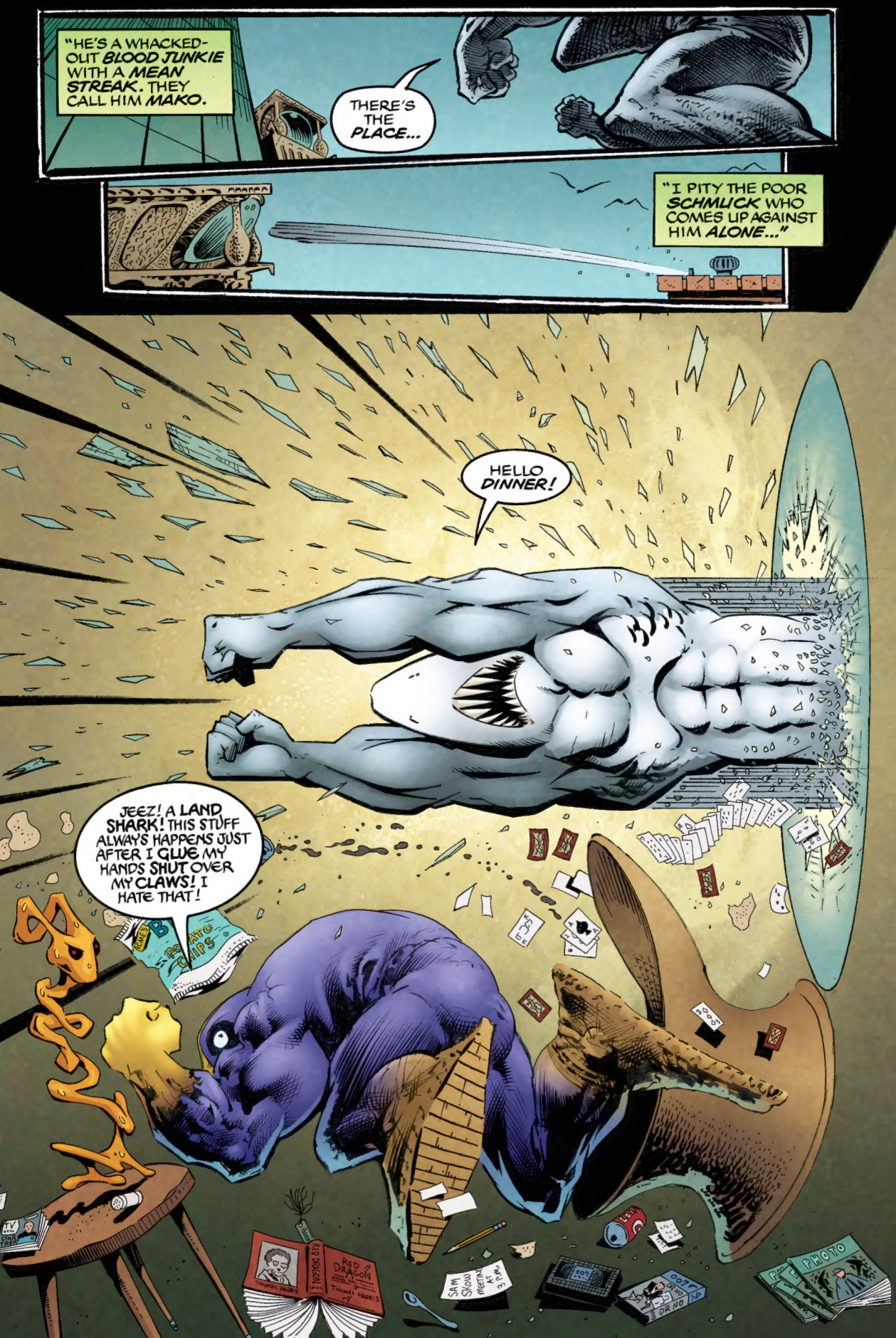
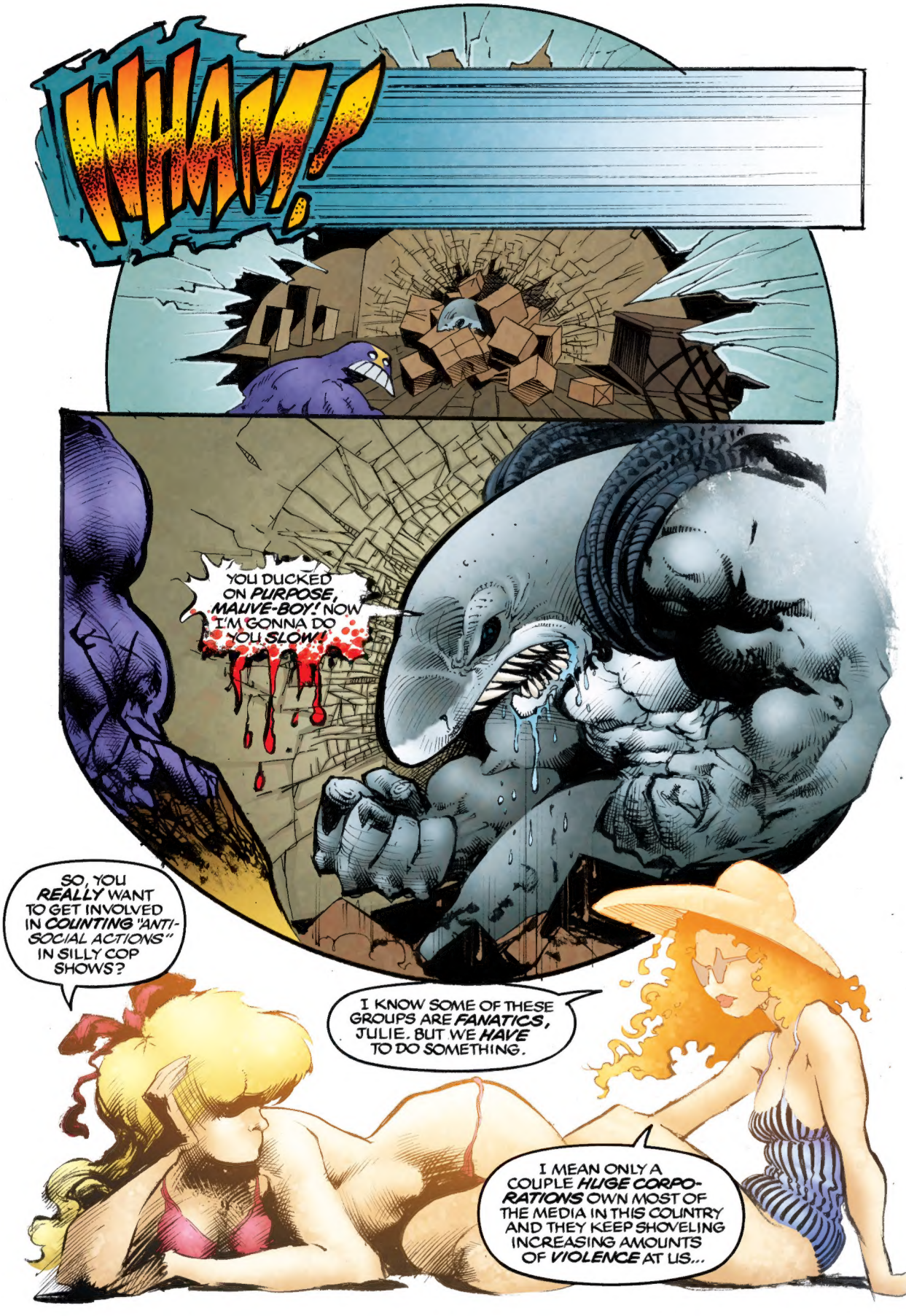
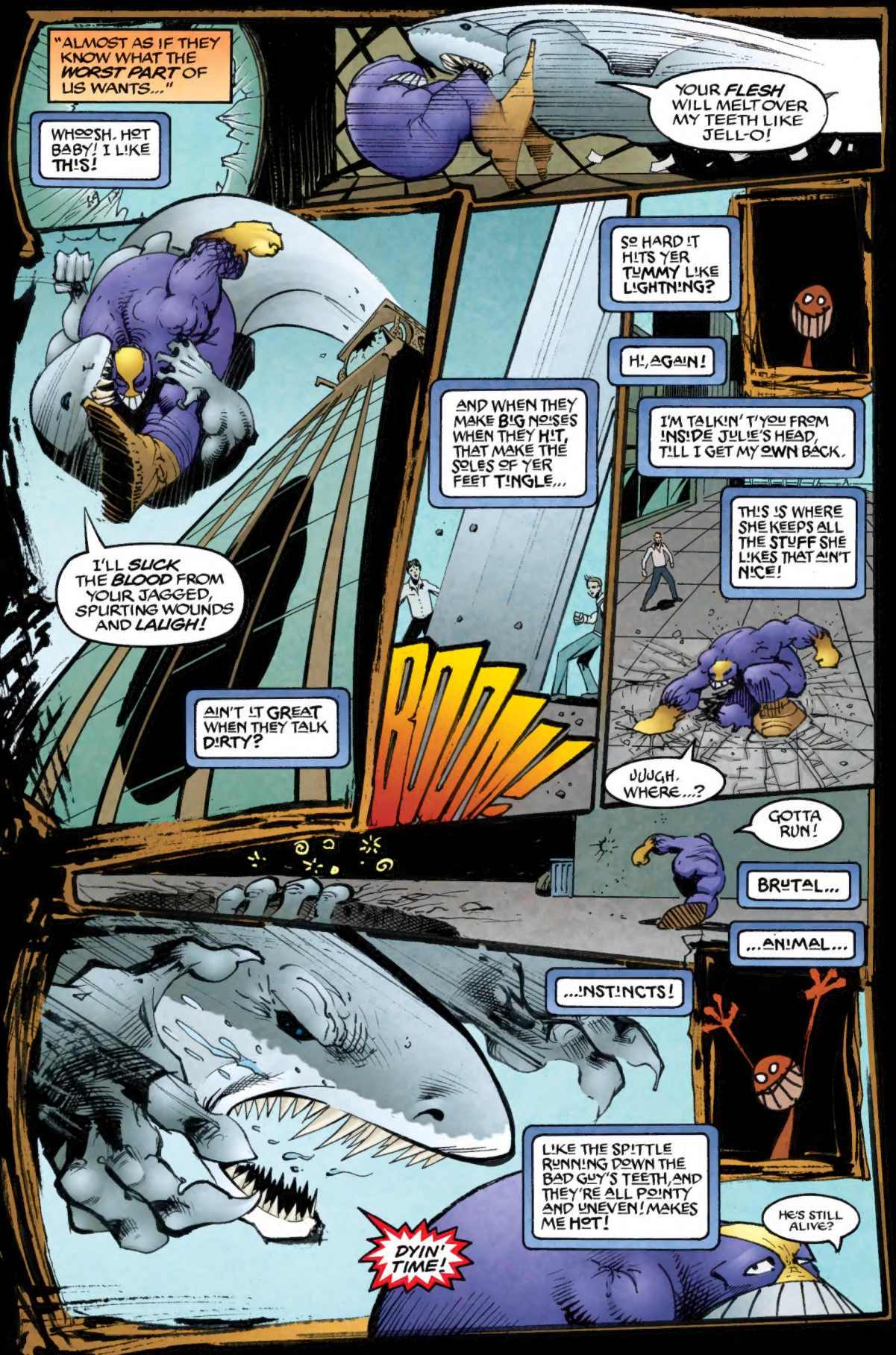

I HOPE MAXX WILL BE ALL RIGHT AT HOME. HE'S REPAIRING A LAMP FOR ME. LAST TIME HE GLUED HIS HANDS SHUT! HIS CLAWS 'N' EVERYTHING!
BRRR! HOW CAN YOU SLEEP WITH THAT... THING HANGING AROUND YOUR HOUSE? HE'S SO... SCARY! VIOLENT! UNCOOL!
Aw, MAXX IS OKAY. HE'S SAVED MY LIFE A COUPLE OF TIMES, I THINK HE'S GOT A GENTLE SOUL.
YEAH. LIKE I'M CONSTANTLY CONFUSING MAXX WITH MOTHER TERESA.
DON'T YOU THINK SOME OF THAT'S IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER?
BESIDES, I COULDN'T SLEEP BEFORE I MET HIM. NOT FOR YEARS. I STILL CAN ONLY GET A COUPLE HOURS A NIGHT.
YEAH, I'M LIKE TOTALLY WEIRDED OUT MYSELF AT NIGHT. I THINK IT'S ALL THIS VIOLENCE WE LIVE WITH. IT MAKES US JUMPY AS CATS! MOVIES... TV... VIDEO GAMES...
I MEAN HERE WE ARE, JUST HANGING OUT, GETTING A TAN--HARDLY GLAMOROUS, BUT SOMEONE COULD READ PIN-UPS JUST IN THE WAY I'M STANDING HERE.
MAYBE. BUT I DON'T WANT SARAH TO GROW UP IN A WORLD FILLED WITH VIOLENCE AND FEAR AND GENDER HATRED.
SHE'S AT THE HOSPITAL TODAY PICKING UP ONE OF HER FRIENDS WHO WAS ATTACKED BY THAT SERIAL RAPIST A FEW MONTHS AGO.
MY WOMEN'S GROUP IS GOING TO BE MONITORING TV SHOWS FOR VIOLENT CONTENT...
LIKE, I'M NO CENSOR, JULIE, BUT KIDS SEE SO MUCH BAD STUFF IN THAT...

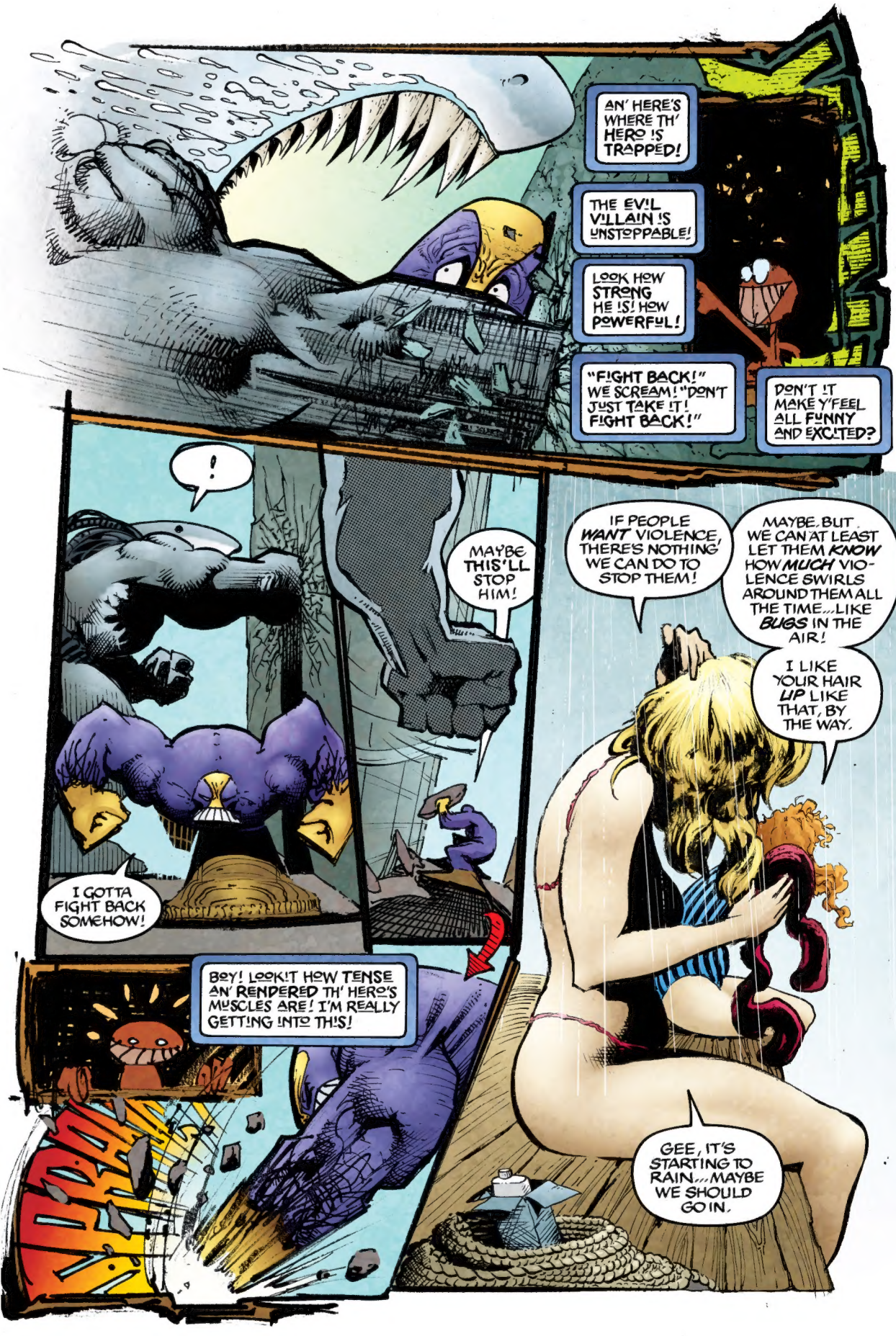

"...BOX--
SEE, LOOKIT, HENRY! I TOLD YOU! THERE'S A GUY INNA BOX!
"--THEY JUST DON'T RELATE...
LOOKS LIKE HE'S BEEN DEAD A LONG TIME!
"...WHEN THEY SEE...
WHACKY COOL, PETE. HE LOOKS ALL SOFT AND GUSHY! DO YOU THINK WE C'N MOLD HIM LIKE CLAY?
"...REALITY.
THAT'S NOT A GOOD IDEA, KIDS.

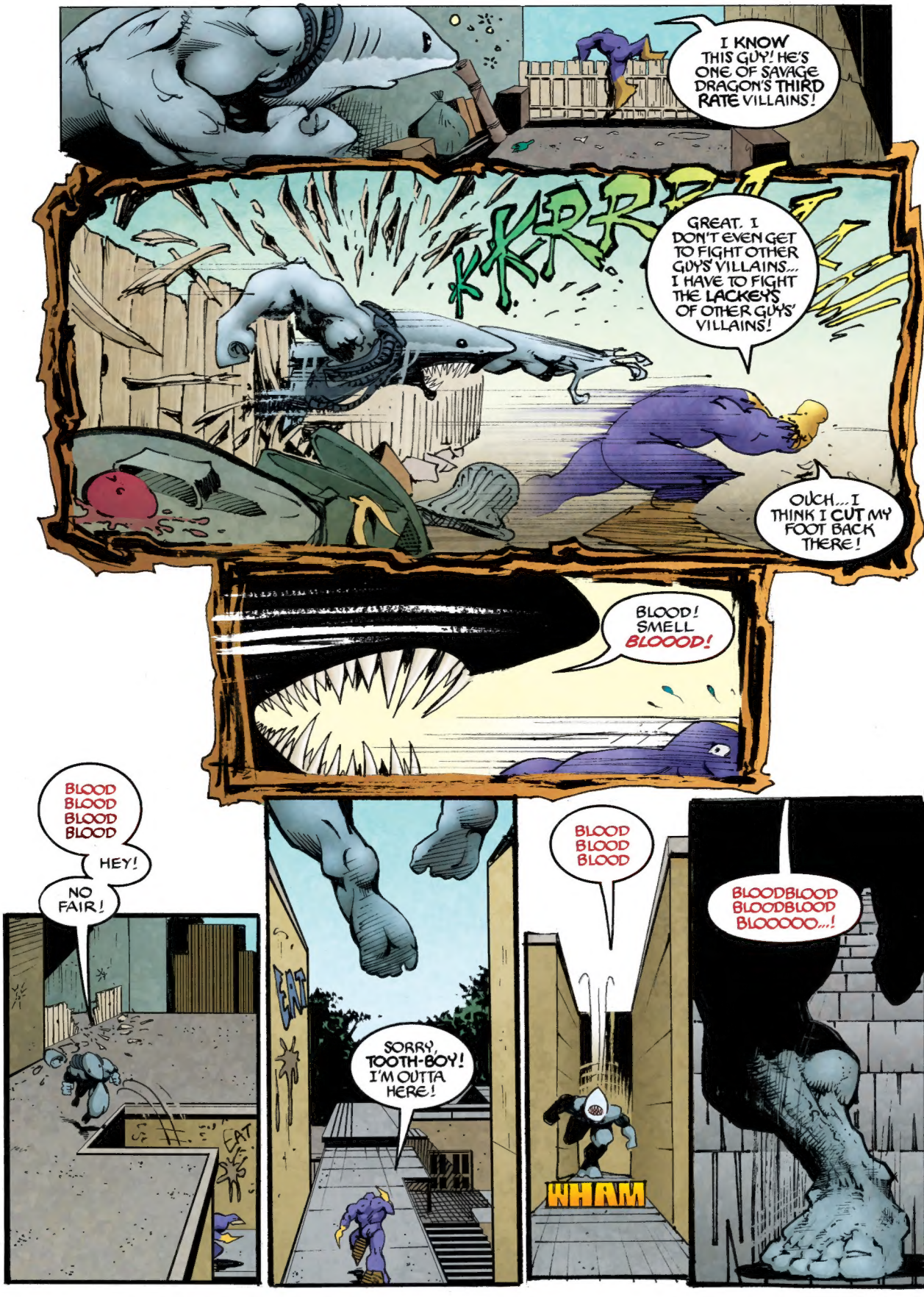

WHADDA YOU CARE, YOU... YOU... YOU...?
HEY, I KNOW YOU! YOU'RE THE DRAGON!
THAT'S M' PRONOUN, SON, DON'T WEAR IT OUT.
RIGHT. I'LL TAKE OVER NOW. YOU RUN ALONG. I'M IN PURSUIT OF A DANGEROUS PSYCHOPATH. THE OFFICERS AND I WILL TIDY UP HERE.
HMM. THE COPS IN THIS TOWN SURE ARE SHORT!
BOY, THE OTHER KIDS'LL BE DISSED WHEN THEY FIND OUT WE MET TH' SAVAGE DRAGON!
YEAH, BUT MY PET OCELOT, NIETZSCHE, AN' ME WANNA KNOW WHO'S THE CRAZED PSYCHOPATH YOU'RE LOOKIN' FOR...?

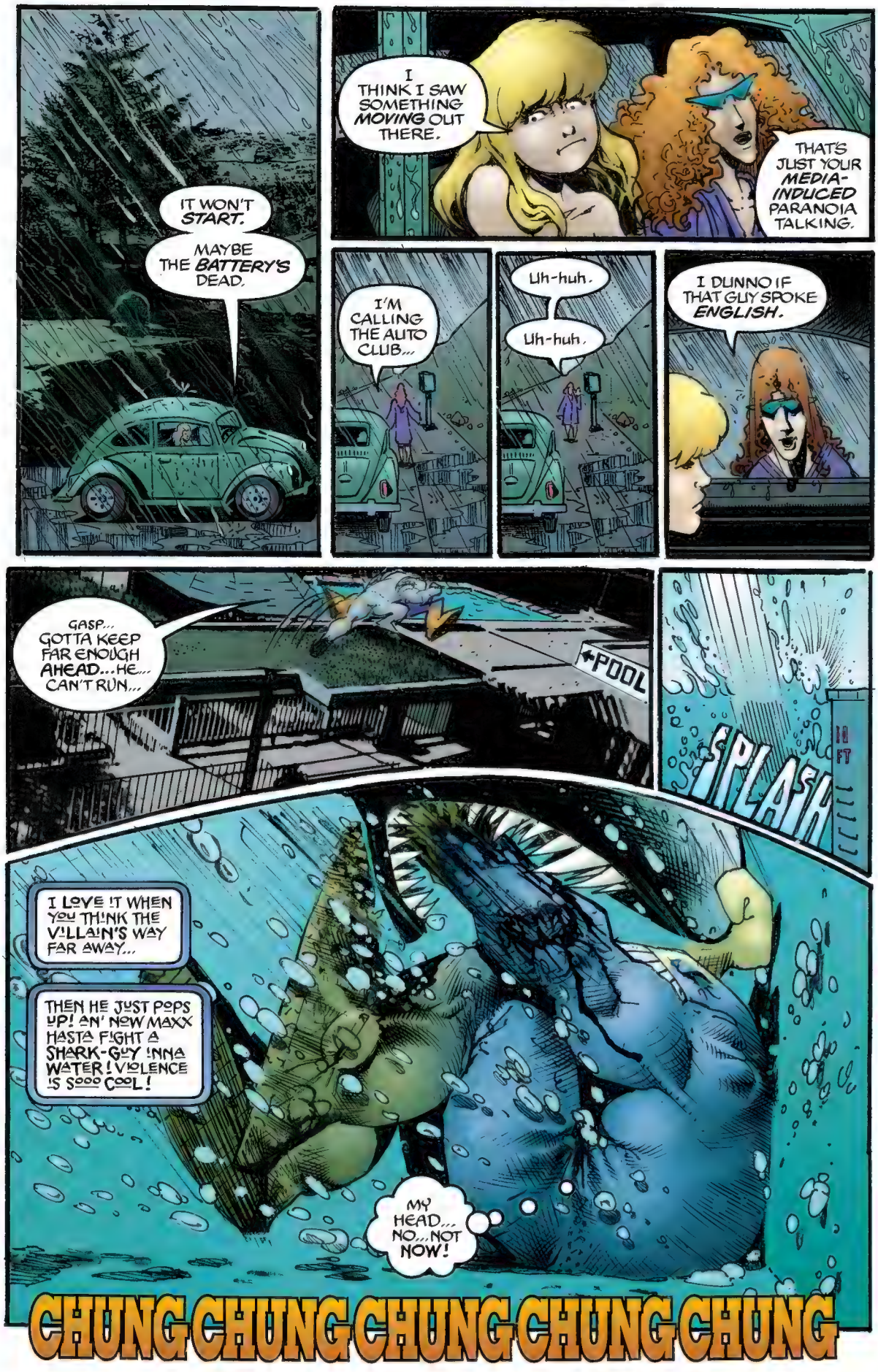

"HE'S A WHACKED-OUT BLOOD JUNKIE WITH A MEAN STREAK. THEY CALL HIM MAKO.
THERE'S THE PLACE...
"I PITY THE POOR SCHMUCK WHO COMES UP AGAINST HIM ALONE..."
HELLO DINNER!
JEEZ! A LAND SHARK! THIS STUFF ALWAYS HAPPENS JUST AFTER I GLUE MY HANDS SHUT OVER MY CLAWS! I HATE THAT!
RED DRAGON
Thomas Harris
SAM Show meeting at 3 P.M.
PHOTO


WHAM!
YOU DUCKED ON PURPOSE, MAUVE-BOY! NOW I'M GONNA DO YOU SLOW!
SO, YOU REALLY WANT TO GET INVOLVED IN COUNTING "ANTI-SOCIAL ACTIONS" IN SILLY COP SHOWS?
I KNOW SOME OF THESE GROUPS ARE FANATICS, JULIE. BUT WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING.
I MEAN ONLY A COUPLE HUGE CORPORATIONS OWN MOST OF THE MEDIA IN THIS COUNTRY AND THEY KEEP SHOVELING INCREASING AMOUNTS OF VIOLENCE AT US...


"ALMOST AS IF THEY KNOW WHAT THE WORST PART OF LIS WANTS..."
WHOOSH. HOT BABY! I LIKE TH!S!
I'LL SUCK THE BLOOD FROM YOUR JAGGED, SPURTING WOUNDS AND LAUGH!
AIN'T IT GREAT WHEN THEY TALK DIRTY?
BOOM!
AND WHEN THEY MAKE BIG NOISES WHEN THEY HIT, THAT MAKE THE SOLES OF YER FEET TINGLE...
YOUR FLESH WILL MELT OVER MY TEETH LIKE JELL-O!
SO HARD IT HITS YER TUMMY LIKE LIGHTNING?
HI, AGAIN!
I'M TALKIN' T'YOU FROM INSIDE JULIE'S HEAD, TILL I GET MY OWN BACK.
THIS IS WHERE SHE KEEPS ALL THE STUFF SHE LIKES THAT AIN'T NICE!
UUUGH. WHERE...?
GOTTA RUN!
BRUTAL...
...ANIMAL...
...INSTINCTS!
LIKE THE SPITTLE RUNNING DOWN THE BAD GUY'S TEETH, AND THEY'RE ALL POINTY AND UNEVEN! MAKES ME HOT!
DYIN' TIME!
HE'S STILL ALIVE?


AN' HERE'S WHERE TH' HERO IS TRAPPED!
THE EVIL VILLAIN IS UNSTOPPABLE!
LOOK HOW STRONG HE IS! HOW POWERFUL!
"FIGHT BACK!" WE SCREAM! "DON'T JUST TAKE IT! FIGHT BACK!"
DON'T IT MAKE Y'FEEL ALL FUNNY AND EXCITED?
!
MAYBE THIS'LL STOP HIM!
I GOTTA FIGHT BACK SOMEHOW!
BOY! LOOK!T HOW TENSE AN' RENDERED TH' HERO'S MUSCLES ARE! I'M REALLY GETTING INTO THIS!
IF PEOPLE WANT VIOLENCE, THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO TO STOP THEM!
MAYBE. BUT WE CAN AT LEAST LET THEM KNOW HOW MUCH VIOLENCE SWIRLS AROUND THEM ALL THE TIME... LIKE BUGS IN THE AIR!
I LIKE YOUR HAIR UP LIKE THAT, BY THE WAY.
GEE, IT'S STARTING TO RAIN... MAYBE WE SHOULD GO IN.


I KNOW THIS GUY! HE'S ONE OF SAVAGE DRAGON'S THIRD RATE VILLAINS!
KKRRAL
GREAT. I DON'T EVEN GET TO FIGHT OTHER GUYS' VILLAINS... I HAVE TO FIGHT THE LACKEYS OF OTHER GUYS' VILLAINS!
OUCH... I THINK I CUT MY FOOT BACK THERE!
BLOOD! SMELL BLOOOD!
BLOOD BLOOD BLOOD BLOOD
HEY!
NO FAIR!
EAT
SORRY, TOOTH-BOY! I'M OUTTA HERE!
BLOOD BLOOD BLOOD
WHAM
BLOODBLOOD BLOODBLOOD BLOOOOO...!


IT WON'T START.
MAYBE THE BATTERY'S DEAD.
I THINK I SAW SOMETHING MOVING OUT THERE.
THAT'S JUST YOUR MEDIA-INDUCED PARANOIA TALKING.
I'M CALLING THE AUTO CLUB...
Uh-huh.
Uh-huh.
I DUNNO IF THAT GUY SPOKE ENGLISH.
GASP... GOTTA KEEP FAR ENOUGH AHEAD...HE... CAN'T RUN...
POOL
SPLASH
10 FT
I LOVE IT WHEN YOU THINK THE VILLAIN'S WAY FAR AWAY...
THEN HE JUST POPS UP! AN' NOW MAXX HASTA FIGHT A SHARK-GUY INNA WATER! VIOLENCE IS SOOO COOL!
MY HEAD... NO...NOT NOW!
CHUNG CHUNG CHUNG CHUNG CHUNG

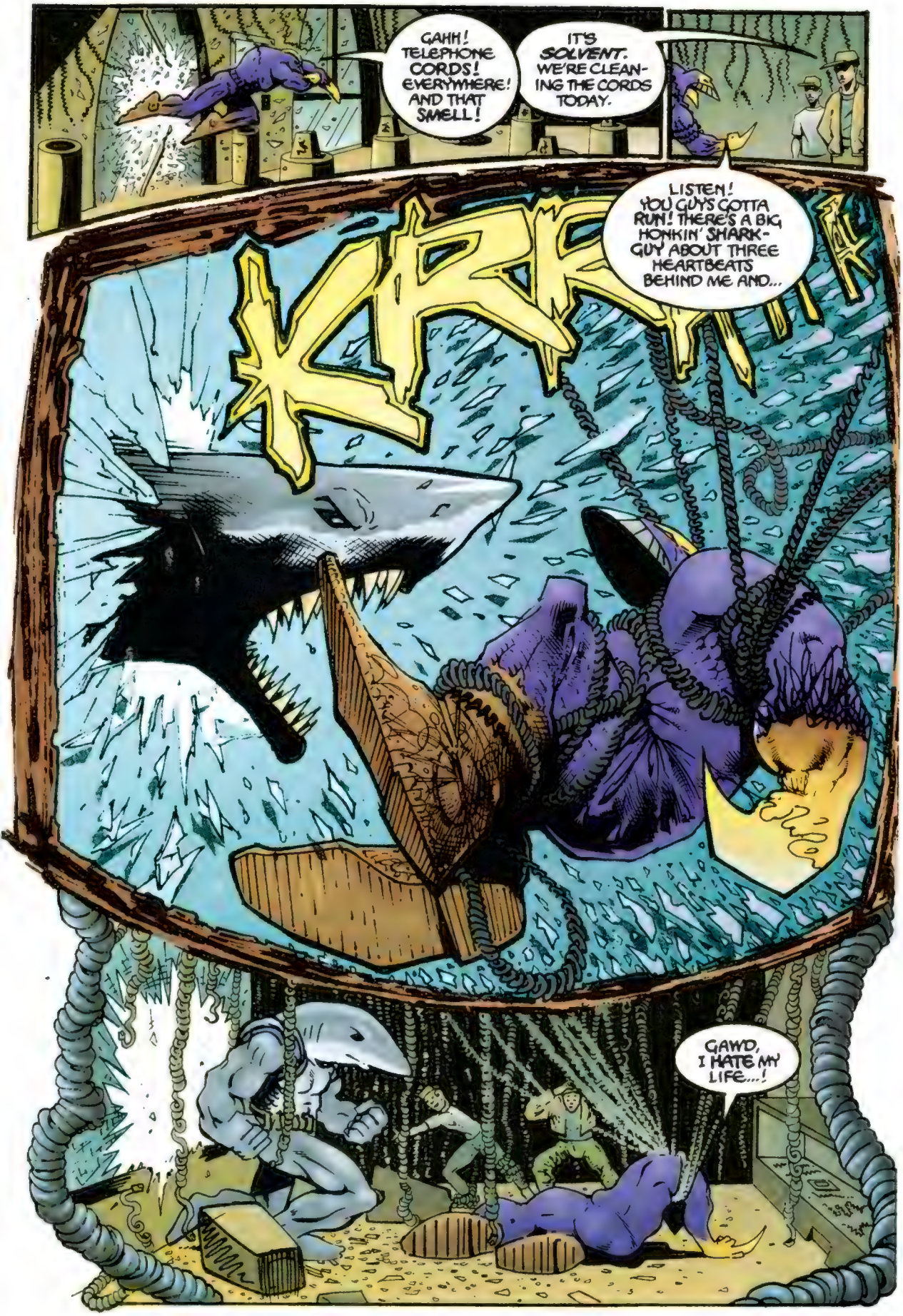
I AM THE JUNGLE QUEEN!
RULER OF THIS WORLD!

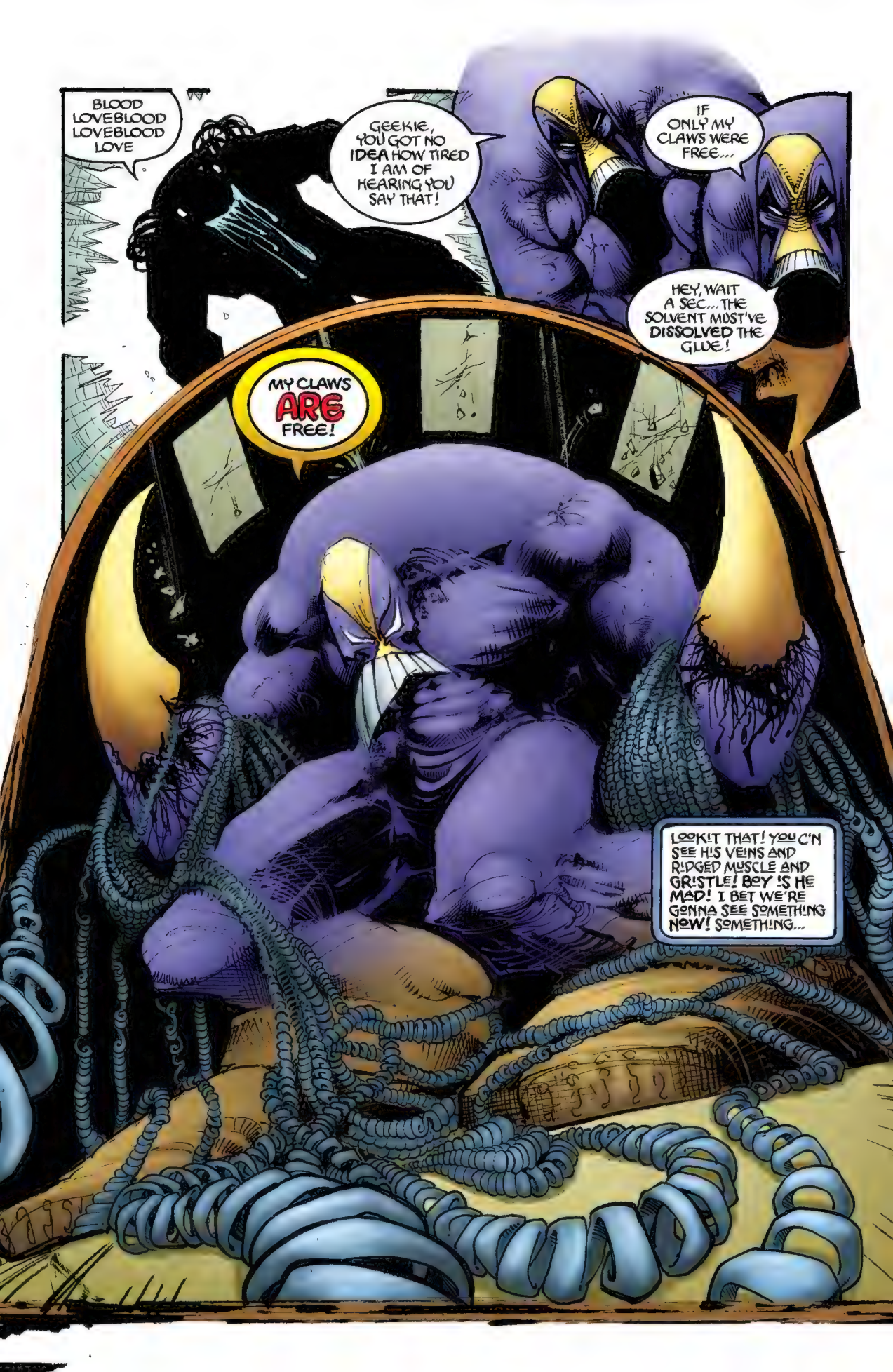
SHE HAS DARK HAIR! I THOUGHT SHE WAS A BLOND...?
AN' HOW COME SHE LOOKS LIKE A BAD PAPERBACK COVER?
I DUNNO. THIS IS YOUR DREAM, MAXX!
SO HOW COME YOUR HAIR IS BLACK NOW?
AND IF YOU'RE A LEOPARD QUEEN, WHERE'S YOUR LEOPARD?
I HAVE BEEN CHANGED. CRUELTY AND PAIN HAVE CHANGED ME.
AND MY LEOPARD IS DEAD.

UHHH... I'M BACK.
I WAS LUCKY LAST TIME... IF HE LANDS ON ME THIS TIME I'LL BE CRUSHED!
YOU KNOW WHAT'S GREAT? WHEN THE HERO AND VILLAIN ARE BOTH REALLY MESSED UP, LIKE ALMOST TO DEATH, Y'KNOW?
I REALLY HATE THIII--!
GUNCH!
BLOOD!
BLOOD BLOOD!
BLOOD BLOOD BLOOD!
BLOOD BLOOD BLOOD BLOOD!
BLOOD.
RIP TEAR RENDSUCK KILL BLOOD KILL
BLOOD SMELL CLOSE GOOD GOTTA HAVE IT
RIGHT. LIKE THAT'S GONNA HAPPEN.

OKAY, SO MAYBE HE'S NOT A TOTAL LACKEY.
GNUUUHH! BLOOD CRUSH DRINK!
TOOCLOSE! TOOCLOSETOFAIL! KILLCRUSHH SUUCKK!
GREAT! SOUNDS LIKE THE CLOSER HE GETS TO HIS PREY, THE MORE STIMULATED HE IS!
I'M WAY, WAY OUT OF MY LEAGUE HERE!

BLOOD SMELL VERY CLOSE EAT TEAR RENT KILL
I REALLY LIKE IT WHEN TH' HERO IS CORNERED AND TH' VILLAIN IS HAMMERIN' ON HIM. KNOW WHY?
'CAUSE THAT JUSTIFIES ANYTHING TH' HERO DOES T'HIM LATER... NO MATTER HOW GROSS!
I'M A LITTLE FASTER THAN HE IS...GOTTA KEEP AHEAD OF HIM...
JUST cords
I'LL DUCK IN HERE...


GAHH! TELEPHONE CORDS! EVERYWHERE! AND THAT SMELL!
IT'S SOLVENT. WE'RE CLEANING THE CORDS TODAY.
LISTEN! YOU GUYS GOTTA RUN! THERE'S A BIG HONKIN' SHARK-GUY ABOUT THREE HEARTBEATS BEHIND ME AND...
KRAK
GAWD, I HATE MY LIFE...!


BLOOD LOVEBLOOD LOVEBLOOD LOVE
GEEKIE, YOU GOT NO IDEA HOW TIRED I AM OF HEARING YOU SAY THAT!
IF ONLY MY CLAWS WERE FREE...
HEY, WAIT A SEC... THE SOLVENT MUST'VE DISSOLVED THE GLUE!
MY CLAWS ARE FREE!
LOOK!T THAT! YOU C'N SEE H!S VEINS AND R!DGED MUSCLE AND GR!STLE! BOY 'S HE MAD! I BET WE'RE GONNA SEE SOMETH!NG NOW! SOMETH!NG...

..COOL.

BOY, THE COPS IN THIS TOWN SURE ARE *SHORT!*

IT'S BEEN *HOURS!* NOBODY'S COMING.

SURE LOOKS THAT WAY.

MY LIFE'S A *JOKE*...IT'S ALL OVER NOW.

SUPPOSE THERE'S AN *ESCAPED CONVICT* OUT THERE! AND HE'S KILLING EVERYONE WHO COMES DOWN THIS ROAD. *THAT'S* WHAT HAPPENED TO THE REPAIR TRUCK!

HAT'S R BLOOD SUGAR TALKING.

NOW HE'S OUT THERE...

WATCHING US...WITH A LENGTH OF PIPE! GETTING CLOSER... *CLOSER...*

WAIT, I SEE... TILLY, *DUCK!*

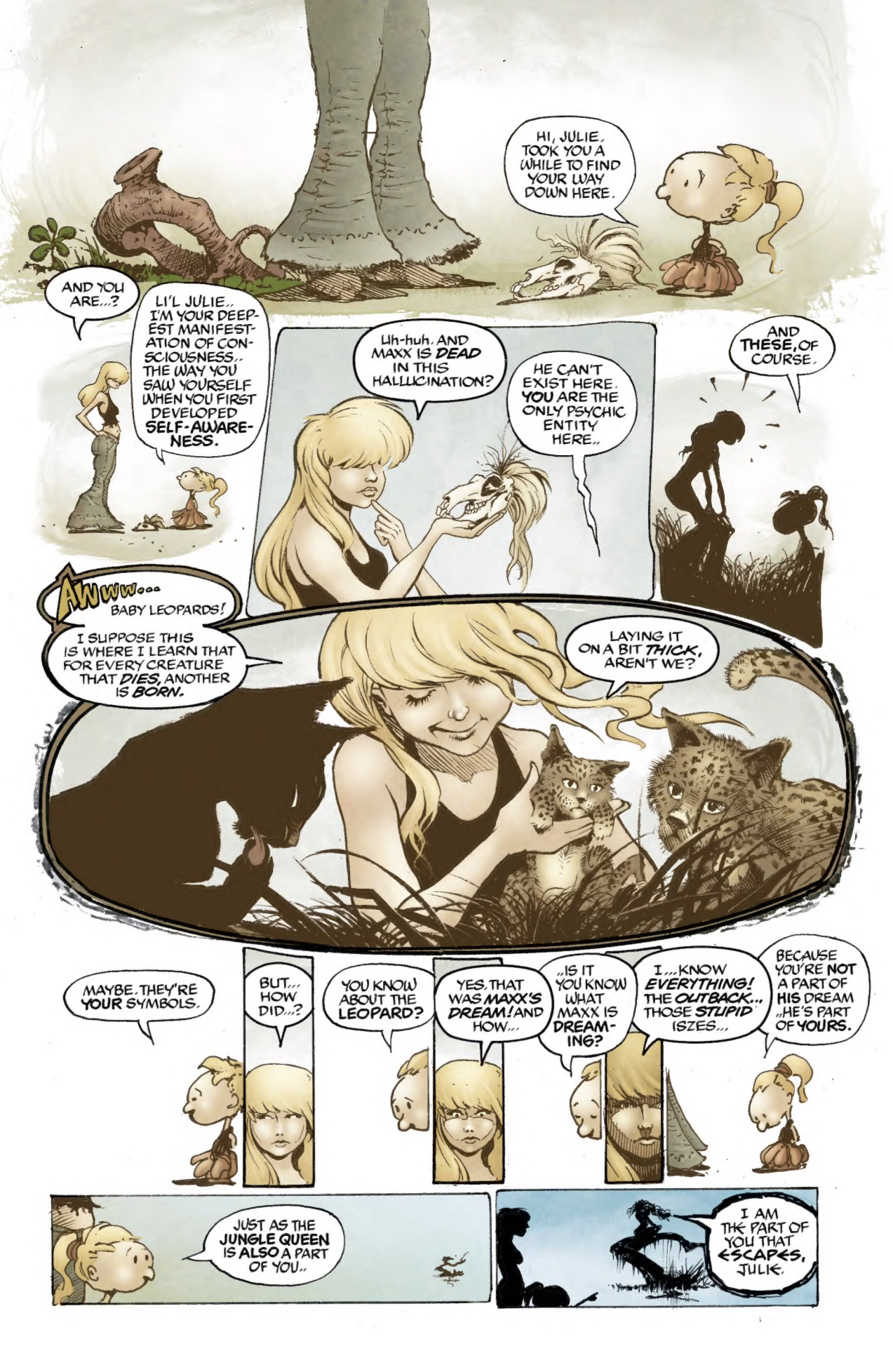
KRAK

A RANDOM SPARK MUST HAVE IGNITED THE SOLVENT THEY WERE USING, AND THUS THE GAS LINE...

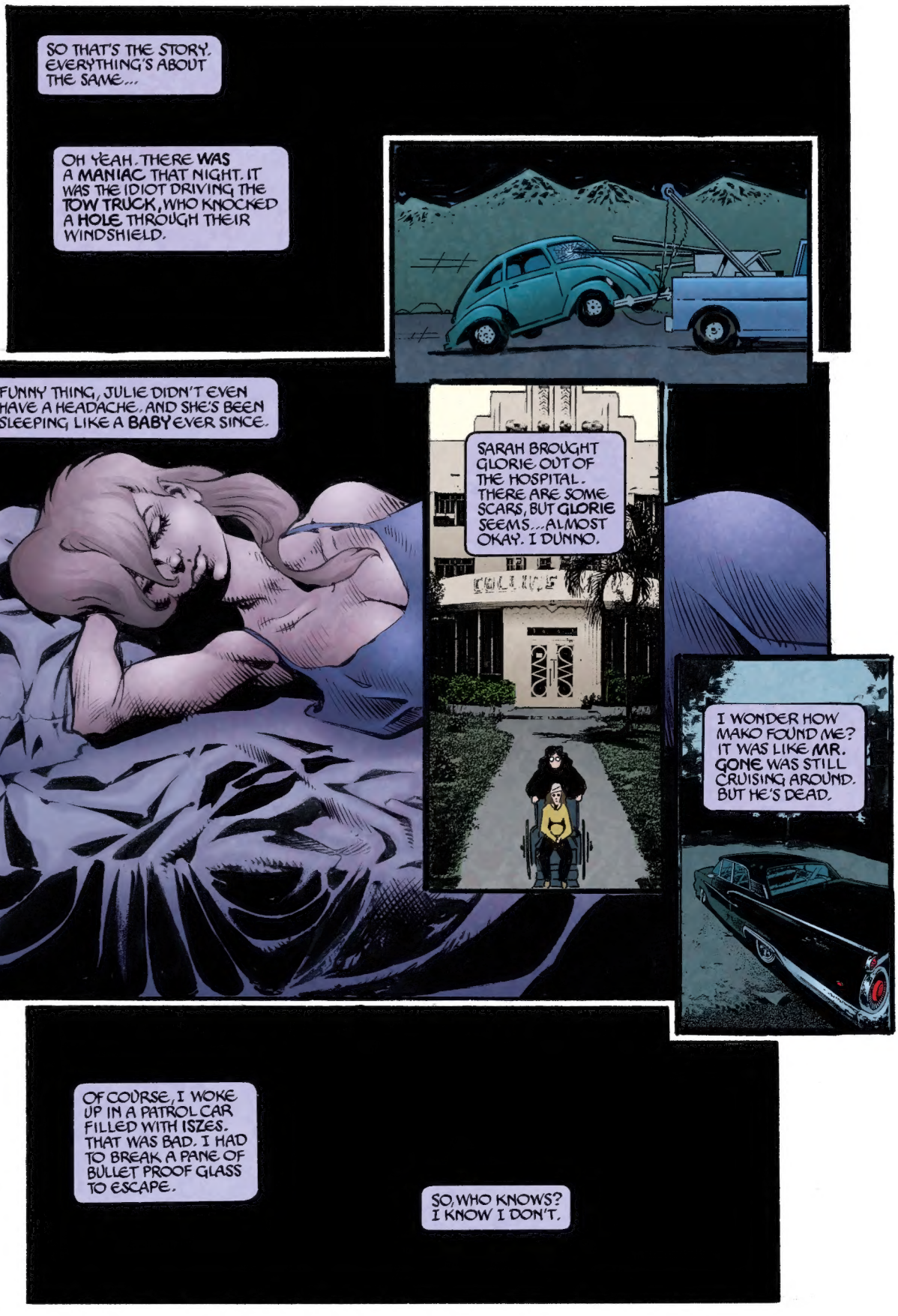
LOOKY DOOKY, CHIEF :;MEEP;:

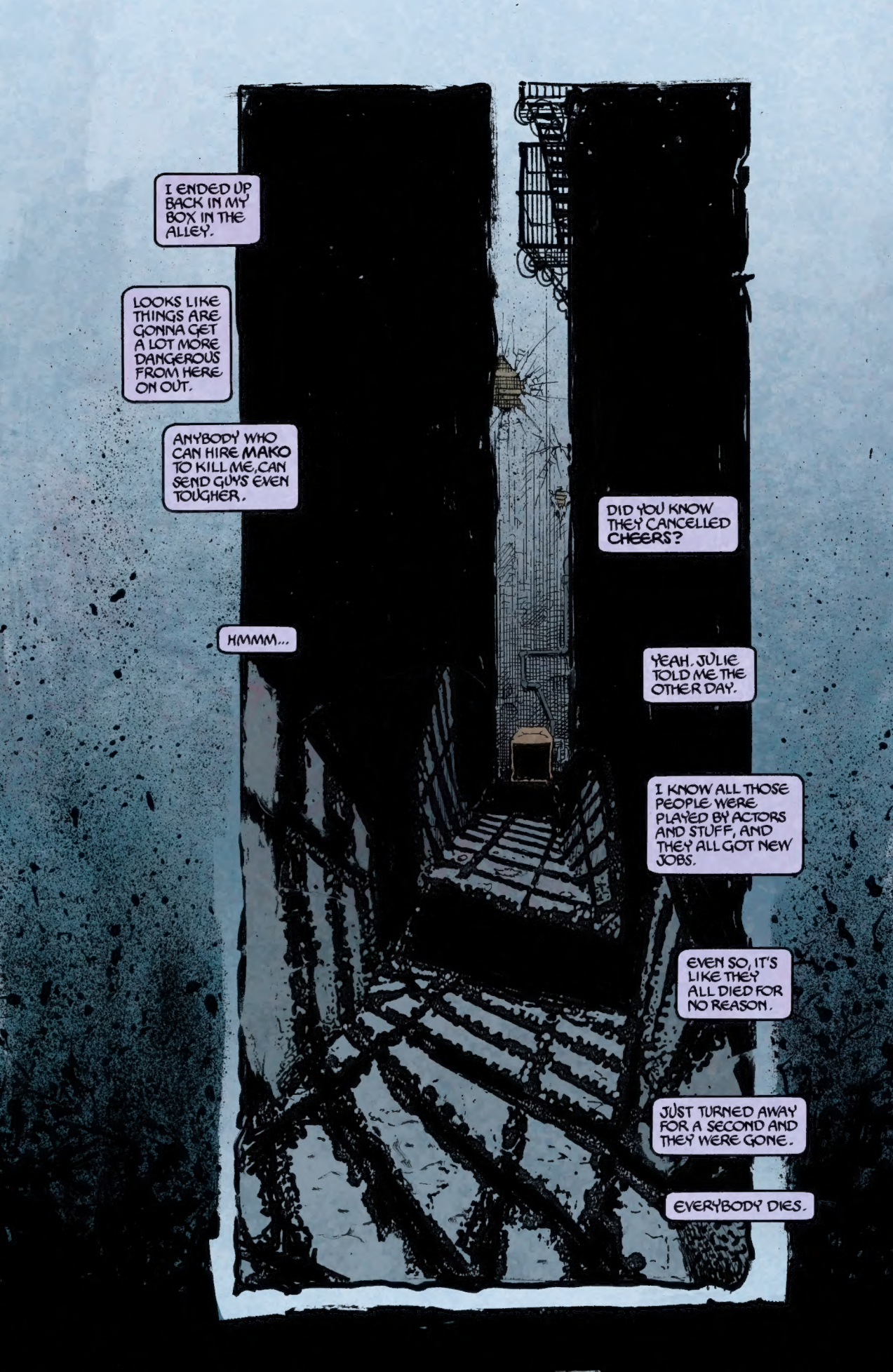
WE FOUND :;MEEP;: ONE OF THEM!

NAH. THAT'S NOT *MAKO*. THAT'S JUST SOME POOR DERELICT.


HI, JULIE. TOOK YOU A WHILE TO FIND YOUR WAY DOWN HERE.
AND YOU ARE...?
LI'L JULIE.. I'M YOUR DEEPEST MANIFESTATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS.. THE WAY YOU SAW YOURSELF WHEN YOU FIRST DEVELOPED SELF-AWARENESS.
Uh-huh. AND MAXX IS DEAD IN THIS HALLUCINATION?
HE CAN'T EXIST HERE. YOU ARE THE ONLY PSYCHIC ENTITY HERE..
AND THESE, OF COURSE.
AWWWooo BABY LEOPARDS!
I SUPPOSE THIS IS WHERE I LEARN THAT FOR EVERY CREATURE THAT DIES, ANOTHER IS BORN.
LAYING IT ON A BIT THICK, AREN'T WE?
MAYBE. THEY'RE YOUR SYMBOLS.
BUT... HOW DID...?
YOU KNOW ABOUT THE LEOPARD?
YES, THAT WAS MAXX'S DREAM! AND HOW...
..IS IT YOU KNOW WHAT MAXX IS DREAMING?
I...KNOW EVERYTHING! THE OUTBACK... THOSE STUPID ISZES...
BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT A PART OF HIS DREAM ..HE'S PART OF YOURS.
JUST AS THE JUNGLE QUEEN IS ALSO A PART OF YOU..
I AM THE PART OF YOU THAT ESCAPES, JULIE.

I REFLECT WHAT'S INSIDE, JULIE.
I AM THE IMAGE OF STRENGTH AND INDEPENDENCE YOU FELT BEFORE YOU WERE VIOLATED.
BUT AS I ABSORB MORE TRAUMA, MISERY, AND BITTERNESS, I CHANGE.
I FEAR WHAT I AM BECOMING, JULIE.
BUT NOW THAT YOU HAVE SEEN... ALL THIS... THE WORLD CAN NEVER BE...
...THE SAME...
...SIZE AGAIN.
REFLECTING? SO SHE'S MY SUBCONSCIOUS? WHY IS MAXX DREAMING HER?
YOU THINK TOO MUCH. LET'S PLAY.
SO SHE'S MY ID AND YOU'RE MY SUPEREGO? SO WHAT'S MAXX? MY ANIMUS?
IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE. THIS AIN'T PSYCH 101. YOU NEED A SPIRIT-ANIMAL TO GUIDE YOU THROUGH IT ALL.
SPIRIT-ANIMAL, huh? LIKE A CHIPMUNK? HOW DO I FIND ONE?
YOU ALREADY HAVE.
JUST KEEP COMING BACK HERE TO PLAY WITH ME..
..AND HELP ME..
..GROW UP.
I DON'T SUPPOSE I'LL REMEMBER ANY OF THIS WHEN I WAKE UP?
OH, NO. THIS STUFF IS BURIED SO DEEPLY, IT'LL TAKE YOU YEARS TO WORK THROUGH!


SO THAT'S THE STORY. EVERYTHING'S ABOUT THE SAME...
OH YEAH. THERE WAS A MANIAC THAT NIGHT. IT WAS THE IDIOT DRIVING THE TOW TRUCK, WHO KNOCKED A HOLE THROUGH THEIR WINDSHIELD.
FUNNY THING, JULIE DIDN'T EVEN HAVE A HEADACHE. AND SHE'S BEEN SLEEPING LIKE A BABY EVER SINCE.
SARAH BROUGHT GLORIE OUT OF THE HOSPITAL. THERE ARE SOME SCARS, BUT GLORIE SEEMS...ALMOST OKAY. I DUNNO.
I WONDER HOW MAKO FOUND ME? IT WAS LIKE MR. GONE WAS STILL CRUISING AROUND. BUT HE'S DEAD.
OF COURSE, I WOKE UP IN A PATROL CAR FILLED WITH ISZES. THAT WAS BAD. I HAD TO BREAK A PANE OF BULLET PROOF GLASS TO ESCAPE.
SO, WHO KNOWS? I KNOW I DON'T.


I ENDED UP BACK IN MY BOX IN THE ALLEY.
LOOKS LIKE THINGS ARE GONNA GET A LOT MORE DANGEROUS FROM HERE ON OUT.
ANYBODY WHO CAN HIRE MAKO TO KILL ME, CAN SEND GUYS EVEN TOUGHER.
HMMM...
DID YOU KNOW THEY CANCELLED CHEERS?
YEAH. JULIE TOLD ME THE OTHER DAY.
I KNOW ALL THOSE PEOPLE WERE PLAYED BY ACTORS AND STUFF, AND THEY ALL GOT NEW JOBS.
EVEN SO, IT'S LIKE THEY ALL DIED FOR NO REASON.
JUST TURNED AWAY FOR A SECOND AND THEY WERE GONE.
EVERYBODY DIES.